

A Short Talk on Dhikr



notes for a bayān given by:

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اذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ

°adhkurūnī °adhkurkum

Remember Me — I will remember you.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:152)



ذُكِّرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ

dhkurūhu kamā hadākum

wa °in kuñtum min qablihi lamina-ḍ-ḍāāllīn

Remember Him as He has guided you,
whereas previously you were lost.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:198)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ
alladhīna °āāmanū wa taṭma°innu qulūbuhum bi-dhikri-llāh;
‘alā bi-dhikri-llāhi taṭma°innu-l-qulūbā

Those who believe
and whose hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of Allah.
Surely in the remembrance of Allah hearts find tranquillity.
(Sūratu-r-Ra°d 13:28)

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ
وَيَشْكُرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَبِئْسَ أَعْدَابُ النَّارِ

alladhīna yadhkurūna-llāha qiyāman wa qu°ūdan wa °ala junūbihim
wa yatafakkarūna fī khalqi-s-samāwāti wa-l-ard:
rabbana ma khalaqta hadhā bāṭilan – subhānaka
faqinā °adhāba- n-nāri.

Those who remember Allāh,
standing, sitting, and lying on their sides,
and contemplate the creation in the heavens and the earth,
"Our Lord! not for nothing have you created all this! Glory to You!
Give us salvation from the suffering of the Fire.

(Sūrah °Āl-°Imrān 3:191)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

qadā °aflaḥa man tazakka – dhakara °āasma rabbihi fa-ṣalla

But those will be successful who purify themselves,
And remember the Name of their Sustainer,
and (lift their hearts) in prayer.

(Sūratu-l-°Alā 87:14-15)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

yā °ayyuha-l-ladhīna °āāmanū
lā tulhikum °āmwalukum wa lā °awladukum °an dhikri-llāhi

Oh you who believe!
Let not your riches or your children
divert you from remembrance of Allāh.
(Sūratu-l-Munafiqūn 63:9)

A Short Talk on Dhikr

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Cursed is the world and what it contains with the exception of the remembrance of Allāh and what He Loves, and the one who teaches others and the one who acquires knowledge." (Sunan al-Tirmidhī)

The Prophet ﷺ would often tell his companions, "Shall I tell you about the best of deeds, the most pure in the sight of your Lord, about the one that is of the highest order and is far better for you than spending gold and silver, even better for you than meeting your enemies in the battlefield where you strike at their necks and they at yours?"

The companions رضي الله عنهم replied, "Yes, Oh Messenger of Allāh!" He ﷺ said, "Remembrance of Allāh." (Sunan at-Tirmidhī)

The Prophet ﷺ said, "People will not sit in an assembly in which they remember Allāh without the angels surrounding them, mercy covering them, and Allāh mentioning them among those who are with Him." (Ṣāḥiḥ Muslim)

As for the practice of Muslims gathering together for group dhikr or the "invocation of Allāh ﷻ," there is ample evidence of its praiseworthiness in the sunnah – such as this ḥadīth related by Bukhārī:

"Truly, Allāh has angels going around the ways, looking for people of *dhikr*, and when they find a group of men invoking Allāh, they call to one another, "Come here to what you looking for!" and they circle around them with their wings up to the sky of this world.

Then their Lord asks them, though He knows better than they, "What do My servants say?" And they reply, "They say, *Subḥan Allah, al-Ḥamdu-li-Llāh, Allāhu Akbar*, and they exalt Your glory."

Allāh says, "Have they seen me?"

And they answer, "No, by Allāh, they have not seen You." And He says, "How would it be, had they seen Me?"

And they say, "If they had seen You, they would have worshipped You even more, glorified You more, and said *Subḥan Allāh* more."

The ḥadīth continues to where Allāh ﷻ says to the angels:

"I charge all of you to bear witness that I forgive them." Then one of the angels says: "So-and-so is among them although he is not one of them but only came for something he needed."

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And Allāh ﷻ says, “They are companions through whom whoever keeps their company shall never meet perdition.” (Ṣāḥiḥ al-Bukḥārī 8.107–8: 6408).

The Prophet ﷺ said, “When any group sits together to remember Allāh ﷻ, the angels surround them, mercy covers them, peace and contentment descend upon them and Allāh ﷻ mentions these people amongst those drawn near (*al-muqarabīn* / المقربين)”. (Ṣāḥiḥ Muslim)

ibn ʿAbbās ؓ reported the Prophet ﷺ said on Yawmu-l-Qiyamah the first people who will be called to the Garden will be those who remembered Allāh ﷻ both in happiness and sadness.” (Bayhaqī)

Abu Darda ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “On the Day of Judgement (*Yawmu-l-Qiyāmah* / يوم القيامة) the faces of certain people will be gleaming with light (*nūr* / نور) and they will be standing on mimbars of pearls.

“Somene asked, ‘Oh Messenger of Allāh who are these people so that we may recognize them?’ He ﷺ replied, “They are those who come from different places and different tribes and came altogether in one place to Remember Allāh.” (Tibaranī)

ʿImām ʿAlī ؓ who stands at the summit of all of the chains of affiliation (*salāsila*, *silsila* / سلسلة:لسلاس)¹ by which the masters of *Taşawwuf* (Şūfism) trace their descent from the Prophet ﷺ who said of his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī ؓ:

1.

Prior to the existence of schools for formal education, students went to masters (*shuyukḥ*) who taught them. Upon completion of their study, they received *ijazah* (permission) which acted as the certification of education. A graduate then acted as a master having his own students. This chain of masters was known as *Silsilah*. Somewhat analogous to the modern situation where degrees are only accepted from recognized universities, the certification of a master (*shaykh*) having a verifiable chain of masters was the only acceptable legitimation. Theoretically one can only receive instruction in these practices (*talqīn*) from an authorised teacher of the *ṭarīqah*, and only after pledging a solemn lasting vow of obedience (*bayʿah*) to this *shaykh*. The *shaykh* may in time give his student permission (*ʾijāza*) to practice the *ṭarīqah*: he may also authorise one or more of them to teach it to others, i.e. appoint them as his *khalīfah*. In this way a hierarchically ordered network of teachers emerges. Each *shaykh* can show a chain of authorities for the *ṭarīqah* in which he/she teaches which is one’s *silsilah* or spiritual genealogy. Usually (with two exceptions) the *silsilah* reaches back from one’s own teacher up to the Prophet ﷺ, through Alī ؓ. The *silsilah* of a Şūfī is both a badge of identity and source of legitimation; it provides one with a list of one’s predecessors and shows how one is related to other Şūfis throughout time.

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انا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها. لا أحد يدخل البيت إلا من خلال البوابة

°anna madinatu-l-°im wa °ali bābuhā:

lā °aḥadā yudkḥila-l-bayt °illā min khilālu-l-bawābah

I am the city of knowledge and °Alī is its gate.

One does not enter the house except through its gate

°Alī ﷺ himself said, “Perpetuate the dhikr, for truly it illuminates the heart and is the most excellent form of worship (‘ibāda)”.

Commenting on the reference to dhikr in Sūratu-n-Nūr (24:36:37)

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ
رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ

fi buyūtin °adhina-llāhu °an turfa°a wa yudḥara fīha °ismuh:

yusabbihu lahu fīhā bi-l-ghudūwwi wa-l-°aṣāl:

riḡalun lā tulhīhim tijāratun wa la bay°un °an dhikri-llāhi

wa-iqāmi- ṣ-salāti wa °ita°i-z-zakāt:

In houses which Allāh has permitted to be built

and in which His name is remembered,

there are those who proclaim His glory morning and evening.

men not distracted by trade or commerce

from the remembrance of Allah

and the establishment of ṣālat and the payment of zakāt.

He said,”Truly Allāh has made the dhikr as polish for the hearts. by which they hear after being deaf and see after being blind and yield after being resistant...

“There have always been slaves of Allāh...with whom He held intimate discourse through their thoughts and spoke with them through the essence of their intellects. They diffused illumination through the awakened light in their hearing and their seeing and their hearts calling to the remembrance of the days of Allāh...

“Indeed there is a special group (*ahl*) who belong to the *dhikr*, they have adopted it in place of the world, such that neither “trade nor commerce” distracts them from it. they spend the days of their life in it...it is as though they had left this world for the next and they are witnessing this world from the next.” (*Nahju-l-Balaghā*)



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There are many more ʿāyāt in Qurʾān, and more ʿaḥādīth that can be quoted, and some of them will appear in the material to follow, but basically what I want to make quite clear is that there is ample proof and ground from both sources for the complete justification of the practice of *dhikr*, both in its individual and group forms and its restrained and euphoric forms. One can also find ample proofs for the accompaniment of the *dhikr* with the *daff* or hand drum.

Further, according to Shaykh Nuḥ Hā Mīm Keller, “As for dancing, ʿImām Aḥmad relates from Anas رضي الله عنه, with a chain of transmission all of whose narrators are those of al-Bukḥārī except Ḥammad ibn Salama, who is one of the narrators of Muslim, that the Ethiopians danced in front of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; dancing and saying (in their language), “Muhammad is a righteous servant.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “What are they saying?” And they said, ““Muhammad is a righteous servant”” (*Musnad* al-ʿImām Aḥmad. 6 vols. Cairo 1313/1895. Reprint. Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d., 3.152).

The fact that dancing was done before the Prophet ﷺ establishes that it is *mubāḥ* (مباح) or “permissible” in the *shariʿah*, for if it had been otherwise, he would have been obliged to condemn it. For this reason, Imam al-Nawawī, in his *Minhaj aṭ-Ṭalibīn*, the central legal work of the late Shafīʿi school, explicitly states:





“Dancing is not unlawful, unless it is languid, like the movements of the effeminate. And it is permissible to speak and to sing poetry, unless it satirizes someone, is obscene, or alludes to a particular woman” (*Minhaj aṭ-Ṭalibīn*. Cairo 1338/1920. Reprint. Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, n.d., 152).

Islamic scholars point out that if something which is permissible, such as the singing of poetry or dancing, is conjoined with something which is recommended, such as *dhikr* or gatherings to make *dhikr*, the result of this conjoining will not be offensive (*makrūh*/مكروه) or unlawful (*ḥarām*/حرام).

ʿImām Jalālu-l-Dīn as-Suyūṭī (جلال الدين السيوطي) was asked for a fatwa or formal legal opinion concerning “a group of Ṣūfis who had gathered for a session of *dhikr*,” and he said:

“How can one condemn making *dhikr* while standing, or standing while making *dhikr*, when Allāh ﷻ says, “. . . those who invoke Allāh standing, sitting, and upon their sides” (Qurʾān 3:191).

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
And ʿĀʿisha  said, “The Prophet  used to invoke Allāh at all times” [Ṣāḥīḥ Muslim, 1.282: 373]. And if dancing is added to this standing, it may not be condemned, as it is of the joy of spiritual vision and ecstasy, and the *ḥadīth* exists [in many sources, such as the *Musnad* of al-Imam Ahmad, 1.108, with a sound (*ḥasan*) chain of transmission] that Jaʿfar ibn Abi Talib danced in front of the Prophet  when the Prophet told him, “You resemble me in looks and in character,” dancing from the happiness he felt from being thus addressed, and the Prophet  did not condemn him for doing so, this being a basis for the legal acceptability of the Ṣūfis dancing from the joys of the ecstasies they experience (*al-Hawī li al-fatawī*. 2 vols. Cairo 1352/1933–34. Reprint. Beirut: Dar al-Kutūb al-ʿIlmiyya, 1403/1983, 2.234).

as-Suyūṭī was a *ḥadīth* master (*muḥaddīth* or someone with over 100,000 ʾaḥadīth by memory) and a recognized mujtahid ʾImām who authored some six-hundred works in the *shariʿah* sciences, and his formal opinion, together with the previously cited ruling of an-Nawawī in the *Minhaj aṭ-ṭalibīn*, constitutes an explicit legal text (*naṣṣ*) for the Shāfiʿi school establishing that circles of *dhikr* which include singing of spiritual poetry and dancing are neither offensive (*makruh*) nor unlawful (*haram*); but are permissible (*mubāḥ*/مباح).

For those wishing more on this subject from the point of view of the fiqh involved I would point you to our book “*Dhikrallāhu ʾAkbar*” and also “*Defense of the Sunnah*” both of which are available on our web page (wp.GreenMountainSchool.org) or on display and for sale in the book stand out-side this gathering



So rather than writing more on *dhikr* as practice or as an action or series of actions and the permissibility *etc.* of all of that and because, as usual the time the organisers have given is very short – something which I bitterly lament because it means that the speaker is usually reduced to giving an inspirational rather than educational talk and the community is long on inspiration but short on education I would like to speak about *dhikr* as awareness or as “a state of recollectedness in the Divine Presence,” a disposition of the soul determined by the consciousness that “if you cannot see Him, yet He sees you.”

In the book *Lantern of the Path* by ʾImām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq  we find:

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“He who truly remembers Allāh ﷻ is the one who obeys Him: whoever forgets Him is disobedient. Obedience is the mark of guidance, disobedience the sign of misguidance. The root of both states lies in remembrance (*dhikr*) and forgetfulness (*ghaflah*/غفلة). Make your heart the focal point of your tongue, which should not move unless the heart indicates, the intellect agrees and your tongue accords with belief. Allāh ﷻ knows what you conceal and what you reveal.

“Be like someone who has shed his soul from his body, or like someone who is attending the great gathering on the Day of Reckoning, not distracting yourself from the obligations which your Sustainer (*rabb*/رب) has laid on you in His commands and prohibitions, His promise and His threat. Do not be occupied with yourself rather than with the duties laid down for you by your Lord. Wash your heart clean with the water of sorrow and fear; make *dhikr* of Allāh ﷻ part of His most glorious *dhikr* of you. He remembers you, but He does not need you. His remembrance of you is more glorious, more desirable, more praiseworthy, a more complete and more ancient *dhikr* than your *dhikr* of Him.

“The knowledge you obtain by His remembrance of you will beget in you humility, modesty and contrition, which will in turn be the cause of your witnessing His nobility and previous, overflowing favor. The latter will then belittle your obedience in your own eyes, however copious it may be as a result of His favors; and you will be sincerely devoted to Him. But your consciousness and esteem of your own remembrance of Him will lead to showing off, pride, foolishness and coarseness in your character, for it means attaching too much importance to your obedience while forgetting His overflowing favor and generosity.

“It will only make you more distant from Him, and all that you will acquire with the passing of the days is alienation. There are two sorts of remembrance: sincere remembrance with which the heart is in harmony, and remembrance which arises through banishing any remembrance other than that of Allāh ﷻ.

“As the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘I cannot do justice in properly praising You as You praise Yourself.’ The Prophet ﷺ did not set any limit on remembering Allāh ﷻ, since he knew the truth that the remembrance by Allāh ﷻ of His ‘*abd*’ (servant, slave, worshipper) was greater than the remembrance of the ‘*abd*’ (عبد) of Him ﷻ”

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Thus it is even more fitting that whoever comes after the Prophet ﷺ should not set any limits, and whoever wants to remember Allāh ﷻ should know that as long as Allāh ﷻ does not remember the ‘abd by granting him success in remembering Him, that ‘abd will not be able to remember Him.



As someone who has been leading circles of *dhikr* for thirty some years I have come to understand some things about the *dhākarīn*. Basically it is summed up in a little aphorism that my Shaykh, Dr. Ibrahīm al-Batawī, *rahmat-ullāhi alayh*, taught me.

“Those who show, don’t know while those who know don’t show.”

Very often there is a type of remembrancer (*mudhakhir*/مذكر) who, at least it would appear, is so caught up in the *dhikr* that he forgets himself and often, crosses the boundaries of what might be considered politeness (‘*ādab*’/أدب) or appropriate behavior in the circle (*ḥalakah*/حلقة). Humility and modesty go by the boards and, it would seem, showing off, pride, foolishness and coarseness rule.

Sometimes, of course, people are genuinely overcome and shout out (*wild maqām*) even, sometimes in *glossolalia*. That is another thing.

It is narrated by ‘Abū Sa’id al-Khudrī ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Occupy yourselves so much in *dhikr* that (the hypocrites) begin to call you mad.” *Mustadrik* of Ḥakīm and *Musnad* Aḥmad Ḥanbāl

Also ‘Abū Jawza ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Perform *dhikr* of Allāh so much that the hypocrites say, ‘You are only doing this for show.’” Bayhaqī.

But there are those who court this way – like wild animals in the jungle of being – and imagine that somehow it is evidence of how far ‘gone’ they are in the *dhikr*. Indeed some of these people are responsible for the low opinion of some (*al-‘amm*) regarding *dhikr*. Suffice it to say that such behavior and such people are not what or who we refer to when we speak of the true efficacy of the *dhikr*.

When Allāh ﷻ is trying to call you through His angels, what kind of sound does He like to hear from you? *yaltamisūna ahl adh-dhikr*: (يلتمسون أهل الذكر). Those who have heavenly tones: the tones of love and humility and those who respect others. Those who are respectful, are those who are always rejoicing and enjoying and always remembering their *Rabb* and praising Him ﷻ.

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What we hope for and like to see in the circle of *dhikr* are those Rūmī referred to in the *Mathnawī*:

They are a mirror for the soul and better than a mirror
hearts polished by invocation and contemplation
to the point that
the mirror of the heart receives the pure, virginal image.
(Mathnawī lines 3153-4)

Our goal, if I may put it that way – understanding of course there is nowhere really to go and there is no body going in any case – is to reach the realm of the pure heart.

Our glorification (*tasbiḥ*), magnification (*tamjīd*), praise (*taḥmīd*), sanctification (*taqdis*) our declaration of divine unity (*tahlīl*) – our *dhikr* – in the true sense – are the means by which the rust of forgetfulness (*ghaflah*) covering our hearts is removed, because as Allāh ﷻ has told us in ḥadīth qudsī on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ:

“Heavens and earth failed to contain Me,
yet I was contained in the heart of a believer”

(Musnad ʿImām Aḥmad)

or in another version

“Nothing contains Me but the heart of My believing slave”

ʿImām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal narrated in his *Kitāb az-Zuhd* (p. 81) from Wahb ibn Munabbah ؓ: “Allah opened the heavens to the Prophet Ezekiel (*Dḥu-l-Kifl*/ذو الكفل) ؑ until he beheld the Throne (ʿ*arsh*/عرش), whereupon he said, “Glory to You, what greatness is Yours, Oh my *Rabb*!” Allāh ﷻ replied: “Verily the heavens and the earth are un-able to encompass Me, and the devoted, soft heart of My faithful scrupulous servant is able to encompass Me.”

This idea is also related in another ḥadīth: “Allah has vessels (for Him) from among the people of the earth, and the vessels of your *Rabb* are the hearts of His righteous servants, and the most beloved of those vessels to Him are those which are the softest and purest.”

Of course, it goes without saying that these ʿaḥadīth are not to be interpreted literally, as meaning that Allāh ﷻ resides in the hearts of people. Rather, what it means is that the only creation (among the heavens and the earth and everything in them) which can carry and contain all the Attributes of Allah is the heart of the believing ʿ*abd* (slave, servant, worshipper).

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This is what is referred to as the *Amānah* (trust/أمانة) in Qurʾān 33:71-72, and why only ʿĀdam ﷺ and certain of his children are able to be the *Khulafā* (representatives) of Allāh (Q2:30 and 38:26).

Only a few of the servants of Allāh ﷺ ever reach this status of reflecting all of the Qualities of Allāh in their hearts, and these are the true ʿAwliyāʾ Karām (أولياء كرام/friends of Allāh ﷺ), who “if you see them, you are immediately reminded of Allāh.”

Asmaʾ ؓ reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Shall I tell you who is the best of you?” “Yes” they replied. He said, “Those who remind you of Allāh when you see them...” (Bukhārī)

These are the people who are referred to in another ḥadīth qudsī:

My ʿabd never ceases to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts (*nawafil*) until I love him and when I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, his foot by which he walks.” (Bukhārī)

We are speaking of the people of the pure heart (*mukhlisīn*/مخلصين).

Those of whom it is said, “Eyes see Him not through the observation of sight but hearts see Him through the truth of ʿimān” for the “pure hearted ones” are those who ‘see’ Allāh ﷺ because their hearts have become the true places of remembrance. Those who see Allāh ﷺ by Allāh ﷺ and know Allāh ﷺ by Allāh ﷺ (*ʿirafu-llāh bi-llāh*) as Allāh ﷺ says,

وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ

wa shāhidiñw-wa mashhūd

by the Witness and the Witnessed

(Sūratu-l-Buruj 85:3)

It is important here to understand we are not speaking about any form of shirk or hulūl or incarnationism or association or relativization but rather of the heart that has been so cleansed that it mirrors the ineffable just as, by way of example, the moon mirrors the light of the sun but the moon has no light of its own. As we can say that from a certain perspective Allāh ﷺ may be absolutely close to us yet we remain infinitely far from Allāh ﷺ.

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

wa naḥnu ʿaqārabu ʿilayhi min ḥabli-l-warīd

We are closer to him than his jugular vein

(Sūrah Qāaf 50:16)

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وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

wa huwa ma^ckum ^oayna mā kuntum
and He is with you where ever you are
(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:4)

while at the same time

وَلَا يَكُنْ لَكُمْ فُتُورٌ أَحَدٌ

wa lam yakul-lahu kufuan ^oaḥad
nor is there any one like Him
(Sūratu-l-^oIḥlās 112:4)

and

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

laysa kamithlihi shay^oun
He is not like any thing
(Sūratu-sh-Shu^oarā 42:11)

so what we are speaking of is the function of the *dhikr* in polishing, purifying and pacifying the heart as we quoted in the beginning:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

alladhīna ^oaamanū wa taṭma^oinnu qulūbuhum bi-dhikri-llāh;
‘alā bi-dhikri-llāhi taṭma^oinnu-l-qulūbā

Those who believe

and whose hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of Allah.

Surely in the remembrance of Allah hearts do find tranquillity.

(Sūratu-r-Ra^cd 13:28)

Through the *dhikr* the rust of doubt, confusion, suspicion, misapprehension and false conclusions is removed from the heart and the confusing alternatives, the opposites, the varying possibilities are all brought to rest, the Truth stands clear from error, Reality (*ḥaqīqah/حَقِيقَةُ*), or what truly is, becomes self evident, the light shines forth and is reflected back clearly, faithfully and without distortion.

All of this through the practice or performance of the *dhikr* and I put great emphasis on the word ‘practice’ and ‘performance’ because *dhikr*, like all of the prescriptions of Allāh ﷻ is not something you think about – it is something you do or is done to you by doing it.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

حَقِيقَةُ لَوْصُولِهِ لِلْمَقْصِدِ وَمُشَاهَدَةُ نُورِ التَّجَلِّيِّ بِانْجِلَاءِ

ḥaqīqatu law uṣūluhi li-l-maqaṣid

wa mushāhadun-nūru-t-tajallī bi-n-jāla

Haqiqah is to reach the desired destination

and to see the *Nūr* of Allāh distinctively



When we look at the how of the *dhikr* or what the rules of the prescription are we find that Allāh ﷻ is quite specific and detailed.

وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

wa °udḥkuri °isma rabbika bukratañ wa °aṣīla

and remember the Name of your Sustainer morning and night

(Sūratu-l-°Insān 76:25)

وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبْتَئِلَ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

wa °udḥkuri °isma rabbika wa tabattal °ilayhi tabtīlā

and remember the Name of your Sustainer
devoting yourself to Him with total devotion

(Sūratu-l-Muzzamil 73:8)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

yā °ayyuha-lladhīna °āāmanū °udḥkuru-llāha ḍḥikran kathīrā

Oh you who have come to believe
remember Allāh with abundant remembrance

(Sūratu-l-°Aḥzāb 33:41)

ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً

°ud°ū rabbakum taḍarru°an wa khufyatan

Call on your Sustainer humbly and secretly

(Sūratu-l-A°raf 7:55)

وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْعُدُوِّ وَالْإِصْصَالِ

وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

wa-dḥkur rabbaka fī nafsika taḍarru°an wa khīfatan wa dūna-l-jahri
mina-l-qawli bi-l-ghuduwwi wa-l-āsālī wa lā takum-mina-l-ghāfilīn

Remember your Lord in yourself humbly and fearfully,
without a loud voice – morning and evening.

Do not be from the mindless.

(Sūratu-l-A°raf 7:205)

A Short Talk on Dhikr

One of the first things that must be understood concerning the practice of *dhikr* is that it, like the recitation of Qurʾān which is also *dhikr*, is always and solely in Arabic.

It is one of the spiritual subtleties of the science of remembering our Reality. Although the true gnostic (realized knower of Divine Reality) knows what they refer to with the mention of the word ‘G-d’, there is not yet in the English language a science to bring that realization fully home to the unaware seeker. One of the true bases of the practice is exactly this science.

For this reason we say:

There is no G-d but Allāh”

Compare simply the effect of repeating the word ‘G-d’ over and over again to the effects of repeating the Name ‘*al-lāh*’ (الله). Sufficient repetition causes one to think about and hopefully know, what one is saying. It also has the effect of knocking at a door until it is opened. This effectiveness of repetition holds true for all of the Beautiful Names (ʾasmāʾ-llāhu-l-ḥusnā/اسماء الله الحسنى) of Allāh ﷻ the attributes of the Divine Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) and is another manifestation of the science of awareness. If we discover that one practice ‘works’ and the other doesn’t, or that one method is manifestly more ‘effective’ than the other the discussion is moot.

In English these Divine Attributes are simply objective descriptions, i.e. nouns and adjectives, and truly meaningful only to the gnostic or the mystic who has already attained an inner realization of True Meaning. There is of course some benefit from the contemplation of the meanings of these words, but there is still until today no established science for total realization using only the English language. There is, however, such a science in Arabic preceded by that in other Semitic tongues, and this is the science of *dhikr* (remembrance) as revealed by the Prophet ﷺ and in turn taught by ʿAlī رضي الله عنه and those he trained and who are findable today.

I, who am from the Shādhidhūlī School, am fond of telling those who come to study with me: Don’t talk to me about Harvard or Yale, Johnny-come-latelies, never mind the Sorbonne or Tübingen, our school has been teaching this science of sound (sonic theology) for over a thousand years and what we teach is an elaboration of a science originally taught by Sayyidinā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه some 1400 years ago.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

The basis of both the individual and communal *dhikr* of the latter day *Shadhḍhulī*, that is, sometimes, in contradistinction with the Madaniyyah branches of the far Maghrib and even, in later times, the Darqawiyyah or even the Kenyan *Shadhḍhulī*, is the *Wird*-l-[°]*Āmm*, because that *Wird* is practiced by all *Shadhḍhulīyyah*.

First we need to understand the Arabic word *Wird* (ورد).

The root meaning in *lisānu-l-°arab* (the Arabic tongue or spoken proto-Arabic) of *wird* is “a watering hole” or “a place when various different wild animals come to drink”. In Standard Arabic language, ‘*Wird*’ (plural: *al-°Awrād* /الأوراد) means ‘source’ or ‘Place of Return’ and, (as above) literally, ‘Watering Hole’. It is central principle of many *Ṣūfī* orders, which refers to a set portion of the *Qur’ān*, or any other specific act of worship, which the worshipper commits himself to recite or perform, either at a particular time or occasion or on a regular daily basis.

In the realm of *°ibādah* it is a patterned remembrance (*dhikr*) usually recited at dawn and dusk hence the connection with the watering hole to which animals go in the morning and evening to drink. In *Ṣūfism*, the *wird*, or *dhikr*, is a practice of repeating the name of Allāh ﷻ, or various attributes of Allāh ﷻ or praises of Allāh ﷻ or a set of invocations given to the student (*murīd* /مريد) by his/her *Shaykh* or deputy (*nā°ib* /نائب) as liturgies of communion including, but not limited to, such invocations as:

°Istighfirullāh – استغفر الله meaning “I seek forgiveness from Allāh”

Lā-°ilaha °ila-llāh – لا إله إلا الله meaning “No deity but Allāh.”

Ṣalāt °ala Nabī or Darood in °Urdu – اللهم صل على محمد وعلى آل محمد meaning “Oh Allāh send blessings on the Prophet Muhammad and on the family of Muḥammad.”

Allāhu °Akbar – الله أكبر meaning: “Allāh is the Greater”

Subḥāna Allāh – سبحان الله meaning “Glory be to Allāh”

°al-Ḥamdulillāh – الحمد لله meaning “Praise to Allāh”

Lā hawla wa lā quwwata illa bi-llāh – لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله meaning “There is no power or strength except with Allāh.”

°Ismu-l-°Aḍḥīm – الله meaning recitation of the Name “Allāh”

In this context *Shaykh* °Abū-l-Ḥaṣan aṣḥ-*Shādhḍhulī* ﷺ was asked, “What deeds best leads to Allāh ﷻ?”

A Short Talk on Dhikr

He replied, “The best states of contentment (*riḍā*/رضا) are brought about by direct witnessing (*shāhadah*/شهادة). The most truthful words are those of the one saying *lāā-°ilaha °ila-llāh* - (لا إله إلا الله) with purity....Allāh ﷻ endears remembrance (*dhikr*) to the remembrancer (*mudhākir*/مذكر) and the remembrancer to *dhikr* in a most sublime and beautiful way. Allāh ﷻ calls for *dhikr* in many different ways. He call for it by way of an order (*al-°amr*) and He ﷻ orders that the remembrancers, male and female (*dhākirin wa dhakiāt*) should remember Him faithfully.”

وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

wa-dh-dhākirina-llāha kathīran wa-dh-dhākirāti °āā°adda-llāhu
lahum maghfiratan wa °ājrañ °aḍhīmā

and the men who remember Allāh abundantly
and the women who remember

Allāh has prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward.

(Sūratu-l-°Aḥzāb 33:35)



Returning to the *wird*, we can say that the *wird* is one of the means *par excellence* for those wishing to rationalise, regulate, systematize and order their daily *dhikr* if, for no other reason, than to make their *dhikr* regular in a world of multi-tasking, almost continual input as well as multiple duties and responsibilities

It also is a very good means for, equally importantly, providing a group platform for communal *dhikr*.

Basically the Wird al-°Āmm of the Shādhḍhuli consist of the repetition of 99 times each for:

1. °Istighfar
2. Ṣalāt °ala Nabī
3. aṣḥ-Ṣhahadah of the Haylalah

These correspond to the spiritual stations of,:

1. Fear of Allāh or *makhāfa*/مخف
2. Love of the Prophet or *maḥabbat*/محبت
3. Knowledge of Reality or *ma°arifah*/معرفة

And these in turn correspond to the three dimensions of the *Dīn* or *al-°Islām* (الإسلام), *al-°Imān* (الإيمان) and *al-°Iḥsān* (الإحسان).

A Short Talk on Dhikr

One may frame these also as:

1. Voluntary self-surrender to Allāh ﷻ (*al-^ʿislām/الإسلام*)
2. Security waranteed by Revelation (*al-^ʿimān/الإيمان*)
3. Restoration of the self to its original harmony (*al-^ʿiḥṣān/الإحسان*)

Each of these is prefaced and ended by a Qurʾānic ʾāyāt and finally the whole process is brought to a conclusion with the numerically open ended recitation of the *ʿIsmu-l-ʿAdḥm* or the recitation of the Name ‘*Allāh*’ to which may be added by the ṣhaykh one or more of the Attributes of Allāh ﷻ (*al-asma-llāhu-l-ḥusna*).

About the Name and the Names or Attributes, the Ṣhaykh رحمه الله said, “It was said to me, ‘If you want My Contentment it will come from My Name and from Me and not from your name or from you.’”

“I asked Him, ‘How is that? to which He replied,’

‘My Names precede My Grants (*ʿaṭāʿī*).

My Names are from My Attributes (*ṣifātī*).

My Attributes are erected (*qaʿimah*) on My Essence (*dḥātī*)

and My Essence shall not perish (*lā yamḥaqq*).’

“If you call Him saying, *Yā Ghāfur* (Oh Forgiver), *Yā Tawwāb* (Oh Pardoner), *Yā Qarīb* (Oh Near), *Yā Mujīb* (Oh Answerer) *Yā Waḥḥāb* (Oh Bestower), you will receive a bestowal or grant for your self and there will descend upon your self something from on high. If you call His ﷻ Name – The Most High – (*Yā ʿAlī*) contemplating all the time His Lofty Attributes and His true Essence you will abolish *your* names and *your* existence and become noughted (*lā wujūd*). This leads to the Station (*maḥal/محل*) of Non-Existence (*maḥalu-l-famāʿ*) and, for some, it leads to the Station of Existence after Nothingness (*maḥalu-l-baqāʿ*).”

This gives some idea of the efficacy of the recitation of the Names.

Normally the ‘*wird*’ is recited at least once daily on an individual basis and at least once weekly as a group on a communal basis.

This latter use of the *wird* has been termed by the host of this gathering, The Islamic Study and Research Association, as “Generic Dhikr” as it can easily and without prejudice be performed by members of many *turūq* without causing any friction or creating any sectarian division as most all of the *ṣhuyukḥ* of different *turūq* find no fault or problem with the whole of any part of the *Wird al-ʿĀmm*.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Dhikr in a gathering can only be done aloud and in unison. The following ḥadīth constitutes proof that *dhikr* done outloud in a gathering is an exalted kind of *dhikr* which is mentioned at the Highest Assembly (*al-mala' al-a'la*.)

Muslim, Aḥmad, and at-Tirmidhī narrate that the Prophet ﷺ went out to a circle of his Companions رضي الله عنهم and asked: “What made you sit here?” They said: “We are sitting here in order to remember Allāh (*nadhkurullāha*) and to glorify Him (*wa naḥmaduhu*) because He guided us to the path of ʾIslām and he conferred favors upon us.” Thereupon he adjured them by Allāh and asked if that was the only purpose of their sitting there. They said: “By Allāh, we are sitting here for this purpose only.” At this the Prophet ﷺ said: “I am not asking you to take an oath because of any misapprehension against you, but only because Jibrīl عليه السلام came to me and informed me that Allāh سبحانه was telling the angels that He is proud of you!”

Note that in the ḥadīth the word *jalasna* – “we sat” – was used in the plural, not the singular. Thus it referred to an association of people in a group, not a single or solitary person.

Ḥadīth Qudsī, “Those that remember Me in their heart, I remember them in My heart; and those that remember Me in a gathering, I remember them in a gathering better than theirs.”

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُوا

faʿdhkurūnī ʿadhkurkum wa ʿshkurū lī wa lā takfuūni

Remember Me — I will remember you.

Give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:152)

This is further indicated by the Ḥadīth Qudsī which runs: “Allāh سبحانه says: ‘I am to my servant as he expects of Me, I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his heart, I remember him to Myself, and if he remembers Me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly better than his...’” (al-Bukḥarī and Muslim)

Thus, silent *dhikr* is differentiated from out loud *dhikr* by His saying: “Remembers Me within himself,” meaning: “silently,” and “in an assembly,” meaning “aloud.”

Let us start with the operative form of the group assembly for *dhikr*; the (*ḥalaqah*/حلقة) or the circle of *dhikr*.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Needless to say there are many operative forms of the *ḥalaqah* or of the *dhikr* but since this is meant to be a short talk I will concentrate on the form employed by a relatively obscure branch (*tāʾifah*/طائفة) of the Shadhḥuliyya – The Green Mountain Branch.

My shaykh, Dr. Ibrahīm Muḥammad al-Batawī رحمه الله enjoined on me to maintain and conduct a circle for *dhikr* at least once a week either on Laylatu-l-Fuqarāʾ (ليل للفقراء) or on Laylatu-l-Milād (ليلة الميلاد) corresponding to Thursday or Sunday evenings.

We usually begin, depending on the time of the year, with Ṣalātu-l-Maghrib which is followed by a free communal dinner. The Shaykh رحمه الله was very keen on this and called it *al-Māʾidatu-r-Raḥmah* (المائدة الرحمة) or The Table of Mercy and insisted that *all* people, not just people coming for the *dhikr*, and not even just Muslims, all are welcome and there is never to be a fee or charge for this meal.

In South Asia this is often referred to as *langar* (Punjabi: ਲੰਗਰ, Hindi: लंगर) which is the provision of free food to the needy in a religious context. Even though use of the word *Langar* is mostly associated with Indian Sikh and some Hindu religious traditions, communal serving of food has also been a rich tradition in Indian and Persian Ṣūfism, especially of the Chishtiyyah Order. There is extensive use of free food imagery and metaphor in Ṣūfī writings. Sugar and other sweet foods represent the sweetness of piety and community with Allāh ﷻ, while salt symbolizes purity and incorruptibility. Bread is regarded as sacred in ʿIslām and is treated reverentially. Through the pronouncement of the *basmallāh* during the bread-making process, the bread is imbued with spiritual power or *barakah* (بركة), which is shared by those who eat the bread. The transformation of the raw wheat to finished bread is also seen as an alchemical analogy for one’s spiritual development.

Our Shaykh رحمه الله was also insistent that this food was not to be purchased from outside or bought from restaurants but should be made by those most closely in contact with the goings-on of the tariqah with love and by their own hands.

This meal is followed by sohbət or spiritual conversation.

This has been defined by Sharīf Baba, “In Ṣūfism, *Sohbet* [which is a Turkish term] is a spiritual transaction between teacher and students which relies on old oral storytelling traditions and practices.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Mystical knowledge and Devotional Love is transmitted during *Sohbet* in such a way so as to circumvent the knots of the rational mind and connect the hearts of the seekers. *Sohbet* can be understood as a spiritual dialogue, a cleansing of the soul and a meeting of the hearts. From the metaphysical to the very physical, *Sohbets* help those gathered to reflect on the events of their everyday lives and can help guide in the search for a sense of unity and security.

In another explanation we find, “*Sohbet* literally is companionship and good conversation. In ṣūfism, it is the company, speech, and conversation of a spiritual master (*shaykh*) experienced by disciples, followers, or guests. In Ṣūfism, such contact is believed to be a primary means of transmission of the grace (*barakah* / بركة) of the *shaykh*.” Also see our own essay on this subject, “*Oral Traditions/ Sohbet*” available from our website wp.GreenMountainSchool.org

In some orders (*turūq*) *sohbet* is fairly structured with the *shaykh* often giving a more or less formal lesson (*dars*/درس) and then taking questions from those who have gathered.

My own penchant in this matter is for a very loosely structured exchange over tea, coffee, sweets and spiritual songs (*na'at* or *qasā'id*) in which the love between those gathered is allowed to move freely between hearts with a few words at crucial points from the *shaykh* either to keep the *sohbet* from falling into idle chat or to touch upon, often but not always, current events or ideas which enlarge the boundaries or parameters of thought of those gathered.

This *sohbet* goes on only to a certain point which remains with the discretion of the *shaykh* this point is call *waqf* (وقف) or the ‘stop’,

Certain factors, time being one of them, play a part in the *waqf* but also the usual departure of “guests”. By “guests” I mean people who may have come for the first time or casual visitors or those who are testing the waters, the curious, the inquisitive – even the doubtful and the cynical – who, sensing a certain lull, make ready to move.

It is very important to understand that this is natural for it is a way that the “guests” or the “visitors” learn how to relax and feel at ease and also pick up on various dimensions of ʿIslām and Ṣūfism or even historical or current event they may not have been aware of. Also it help dispells doubts and fears that they may have had especially if they are more “modern” Muslim or even Islamaphobes.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Under this rubric I include: Secular pot-luck Muslims, Ikhwānis, Wahhābis, Salafis, and Archaic Revivalists who somehow believe in time travel and that we can go back to a past that no longer exists. In any case in response to some subtle message – the “visitors”, usually all around the same time, get up and leave.

After they leave all traces of the meal, the tea, the coffee, the sweets etc. – all return to the kitchen of the *zāwiyah* (زاوية) and I would like to make clear here that a “kitchen” (however humble or small) is a vital constituent element and integral part of any *zāwiyah*.

A fresh green cloth, which we refer to as the ‘dhikr cloth’ is spread in the place of the *mā'idah* (المائدة). Water is poured so that all gathered have access to water as sometimes one gets dry doing *dhikr*.

If there are enough women, a separate cloth is spread for them in an adjacent room which, very importantly, is connected to the main room of the *zawiyah* and NOT some distant place where women listen to the *dhikr* on loudspeakers while watching via video. Their physical presence is of the utmost importance at least for us though I am well aware that some *shuyukh* do not agree on this.

When everything settles and quiets down, and if the lights can be dimmed even somewhat. The *shaykh* opens the *dhikr* with the *basmallah* and then we begin by reading al-Fātiḥah or the very first chapter (*sūrah* / سورة) of the Qurʾān. All *dhikr* begins with recitation of Qurʾān as the Qurʾān itself is *dhikr*. Allāh ﷻ says:

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ

Ṣawd – wa-l-qurʾāni dhi-dh-dhikr

Sawd. (I swear) by the Qurʾān, full of Dhikr

(Sūrah Ṣawd 38:1)

This surah begins with a single letter, which one of the fourteen *hurūf muqattaʿāt* (حروف مقطعات) or disjointed letters by which 29 of the *sūwar* in the Qurʾān begin. They are also known as *fawātiḥ* (فواتح) or ‘openers’ as they form the opening verse of their respective *sūwar*. Then Allāh ﷻ immediately says: “and by the Qurʾān, full of *dhikr*!” If you notice right before that is the letter ‘wow’ (و), which means that Allāh ﷻ is swearing and taking an oath by the Qurʾān itself. This is called ‘*qasm*’ (قسم) in Arabic, which is why the translation reads ‘by’ instead of ‘and’ the usual meaning of (و).

A Short Talk on Dhikr

After reciting the Fātiḥah we begin reading a number of different °āyāt and sūwar of the Qur°ān and, since this is all taking place at night, we always read Sūratu-l-Wāqī°ah (سورة الواقعة) because of the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ in which he advised the people of Madinah that they would always be assured of having food in their house if people would read Sūratu-l-Wāqī°ah every night. Food in this instance means many things including Qutu-l-Qulūb or the Food of the Heart as well as the food of the world.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever recites Sūratu-l-Wāqī°ah at night would never encounter poverty.” (Ibn Sunni 620)

The Prophet said ﷺ, “Sūratu-l-Wāqī°ah is the Surah of Wealth, so recite it and teach it to your children.” (Ibn Asakir)

Similarly if someone in the community or a relative or a loved one has died we will always read Sūrah Yā Sīn as it should be recited over the dying and the dead. (reported by Ahmad, °Abū Dawud, an-Nasai, Ibn Hibban and al-Hakim)

The recitation also usually includes a number of the healing °āyāt as there are always sick members or loved ones and we also try to read a Sūrah or part of a sūrah we are learning as well as a reciting all of the Beautiful Names of Allāh ﷻ (*al-asma-llāhu-l-ḥusna*) and the last few °āyāh of Sūratu-l-Ḥaṣṣr leading up to them:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ
 سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ
 هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى
 يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

huwa-llāhu-l-ladhī lā °ilāha °illā huwa-l-maliku-l-quddūsu-s-salāmu
 -l-mu°minu-l-muḥayminu-l-°azīzu-l-jabbāru-l-mutakabbir:

subḥana-llāhi °amma yushrikūn:

huwa-llāhu-l-khāliq-u-l-bārī°u-l-musawwir:

lahu-l-°asmā°u-l-ḥusna: yusabbiḥu lahu mā fi-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍ
 wa huwa-l-°azīzu-l-ḥakīm

He is Allāh — there is no deity but Him.

He is the King, the Most Pure, the Perfect Peace, the Trustworthy,
 the Safeguarder, the Almighty, the Compeller, the Supremely Great.
 Glory be to Allāh above all that they associate with Him.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

He is Allāh — the Creator, the Maker, the Giver of Form.

To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Him.

He is the Almighty, the All-Wise.

(Suratu-l-Hashr 59:23-24)



After completing the “Names” we usually go to different Sūwar in the Jūz °Amm and recite them as, especially if we have some new people in the circle, they will most likely have some of them by heart.

Toward the very end of our recitation we recite the four “Quls” making sure to recite Sūratu-l-°Ikḥlāṣ three times in accord with the report of al-Bukhārī, in his Ṣāhīḥ that °Abū Saïd al-Kḥudrī ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ asked the companions ؓ: “Are you not able to read a third of the Qur°ān in one night?” They found this very difficult and replied that nobody amongst them could do so. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: “Surah Qul Huwa Allahu Aḥad equals a third of the Qur°ān.” And Muslim also reported that °Ābū Darḍa ؓ narrated: “Say, He is Allāh, The One (*qul huwa-llahu aḥad*), (Surah 112) equals a third of the Qur°ān.” at-Tirmidhī. And al-Mubarakpuri stated in his *Sharh* of at-Tirmidhī that this could mean that whoever reads it three times is as though he reads the entire Qur°an.

For this reason we conclude our reading with the Du°ā° of Khātmu-l-Qur°ān or the Du°a° that is customarily read on completing the

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْسِ وَحُشَّتِي فِي قَبْرِى ☆ اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْنِي بِالْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ ☆ وَاجْعَلْهُ
لِيْ إِمَامًا وَنُورًا وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً ☆ اللَّهُمَّ ذَكِّرْنِيْ مِنْهُ مَا نَسِيتُ وَعَلِّمْنِيْ مِنْهُ
مَا جَهِلْتُ وَارْزُقْنِيْ تِلَاوَتَهُ أَنْاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَأَنْاءَ النَّهَارِ وَاجْعَلْهُ لِيْ حُجَّةً يَّارَبَّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ☆ آمِينَ ☆

upon completing this du°ā° we begin the actual Wird or formal *dhikr*.

The first part consists of reciting ninety-nine times °*istaghfiru-llāh* which we do after first reading the °āyāt justifying this practice as our Ṣhāykh ؓ was very keen on emphasizing to us that there is nothing we do in our practices which cannot be found in Qur°ān. This is important in a time when so many wild attack animals abound.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

وَمَا تَقْدِمُوا إِلَّا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ وَأَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا
وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

wa mā tuqaddimū li-añfusikum min khayrin
tajidūhu °inda-llāhi huwa khayrāñw-wa °a°dḥama °ajrā:
wa °istaghfiru-llāh: °inna-llāha ḡhafūrur-rahīm.

Whatever good you send ahead for yourselves
you will find it with Allāh as something better and a greater reward.

So seek forgiveness from Allāh –

Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

(Sūratu-l-Muzzamil 73:20)

The °istighfār is followed in turn by the Ṣalat °Ala Nabīyy or Darood
and then by the Ṣhadadah or the Hayalah, both of which are done in
the standing position.

There are of course some who object to standing for *dhikr*, or *salawat*
but we remind all those who have any objection of this °āyah.

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ
وَيَشْكُرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فِتْنَةً عَذَابَ النَّارِ

°alladhīna yadhkurūna-llāha qiyāman wa qu°ūdan wa °ala junūbihim
wa yatafakkarūna fī kḡalqi-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḡ:

Those who remember Allah,
standing, sitting, and lying on their sides,
and contemplate the creation in the heavens and the earth.

(Sūrah °Āl-°Imrān 3:191)

Between the °istighfār and Ṣalat °Ala Nabīyy (*darood*) we recite:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

°inna-llāha wa malā°ikatahu yuṣallūna °ala-n-nabiyyi yā °ayyuha-l-
ladḡina °āāmanū ṣallū °alayhi wa sallimū taslīman

Allāh and His angels call down blessings on the Prophet.

Oh you who have believe! call down blessings on him
and ask for complete peace and safety for him.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

The preceding °āyāt is from Sūrah al-Aḥzab 33:56.

Between the Ṣālat °Ala Nabīyy or Darood and the Ṣhadadah or the Hayalah the following °āyāt is recited:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَانِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ • إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۚ

shahida-llāhu °annahu lāā °ilaha °illā huwa
wa-l-malāā°ikatu wa °ūlu-l-°ilmi qāā°iman bi-l-qistā:
lāā °ilaha °illā huwa-l-°azīzu -l-ḥakīm:
°inna-d-dīna °inda-llāhi-l-°islām

Allāh bears witness that there is no deity but Him,
as do the angels and the people of knowledge, upholding justice.

There is no deity but Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

The religion (*dīn*) with Allāh is °Islām.

(Sūrah °Āl °Imrān 3:18-19)

when the Haylalah – lāā °ilaha °illā-llah – is completed everyone
sits down and we recite:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرَكَ لَهُ: لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ:
يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ هَيَّ لَا يَمُوتُ: وَيَدُ الْخَيْرِ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

lā °ilahā °illa-llāh waḥdahū lā ṣharikalahu:
lahu-l-mulk wa lahu-l-ḥamd
yuḥyī wa yumītu wa huwa hayyun lā yāmūt: wa bi-yadihi-l-kḥayr
wā huwa °ala kulli ṣhayin° qadīr wa °ilayhi-l-maṣīr

There is no deity save Allāh – One without a Partner

His is the Dominion and to Him is the Praise.

He makes to live and causes to die and He lives and does not die.

In His Hand is the Good and He has Power over all things.

To Him is the Final Return

The number of repetitions of the Name varies between 300 and 1,000
and is followed by other Divine Names that are chanted with a very
long drawn out breath and in close harmony and most usually
contain *Hūūūūūūūū* and *Ḥayyyyyyy* and/or other Names which
change depending on the state of those who are gathered in the *dhikr*.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

This is followed by a long *du‘ā‘* most of which is gathered from the *Ḥizbu-l-Baḥr* and the *Ḥizbu-l-Barr* of Shāykh ‘Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣḥ-Shaḍḥḍḥulī ﷺ and then ‘*adhān* (أَذَان) is made for *Ṣalātu-l-‘Ishā‘* (صلاة العشاء) after which much *du‘ā‘* is made especially for any participants or friends or loved ones in the community who are ill. *Du‘ā‘* is followed by the Sunnah prayers that come after *Ṣalātu-l-‘Ishā‘*. With this the gathering is complete and the *dhākirīn wa-dh-dhākirāt* melt into the night and go their separate ways.



This is a fair description of the weekly gathering for group *dhikr* by one particular *tā‘ifah* (طائفة) of the Shāḍḥḍḥulī *ṭarīqah* (طريقة).

At the same time most, if not all, of the *dhākirīn wa-dh-dhākirāt* are also practicing their *dhikr* on a daily basis usually alone or sometimes *en famille* with the children or simply husband and wife.

Our particular *tā‘ifah* encourages its members to engage for at least an hour in daily recitation of Qur‘ān and Aḥzāb as well as *dhikr*.

Since I have gone in to some detail covering the group gathering I would like to touch here on a few methods for individual *dhikr*.



As for timings, in the context of the modern world in which we all live and which is likely to include daily jobs either outside or inside the home, the best times are after *Ṣalātu-l-‘Fajr* and *Ṣalātu-l-‘Ishā‘*.

The first thing is to set up within the home, if at all possible, a place specifically for the performance of both the *ṣalāt* and the *dhikr*. What is called a *hierotopy* (from the Greek: ἱερός, sacred + τόπος, place, space) or *temenos* (τέμενος) though this more properly is an outdoor sacred space. In Arabic the *hierotopy* is called a *muṣalla* (مصلی) which means any place for worship that has not been formally sanctified as a masjid and originally means simply a prayer rug.

This space or place must be kept scrupulously clean and, if possible, a good incense (*bokḥur*/بخور) or (*‘iṭr*/عطر) should be used to keep the space smelling pure. Attention should also be paid to the means of lighting which, if possible, should be adjustable with different levels for reading and for contemplation.

Wall decoration should be kept to a minimum with, perhaps, a framed print of the Qur‘ān or Qur‘ānic ‘āyat and, possibly, the Divine Name or the Divine Name and that of the Prophet ﷺ.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

الله

or



عرفان

The concentrator on His personal name Allāh ﷻ should perform the ablutions (*al-wūḍuʿ* / الوضوء); wear clean clothes and sit cross legged in the clean place. He should empty and distract his heart from all the extraneous thoughts *i.e.*, worldly worries and sensual fantasies. To stop the passage of external *Shaytanic* thoughts and sensual fantasies you should perform the following safeguards around you and read the following prayers three times and blow on the chest and blowing it on the palms of both the hands and rubbing them over the entire body.

1. Basmallah
2. Sūratu-l-Fātihah
3. °Ayātu-l-Kursī
4. Suratu-l-Kāfirūn
5. Sūratu-l-°Ikhlāṣ
6. Sūratu-l-Falāq
7. Sūratu-n-Nās
8. Ṣālat °Ala Nabī or Darood
9. °Istighfār
10. °Āyāt — *ṣalāmun qawlam-mi-r-rabbi-raḥīm*
11. °Āyāt — *wa-llāhu mustāna °ala mustaṣifun*
12. Kalimat-t-Tamjīd — *subāḥana-allāhi wa-l-ḥamdu li-llāhi wa lāā °illāha °illa-llāhu wa-llāhu-l-°akbar wa lā hawla wa lā quw-wata °illā bi-llāhi-l-°azīzu-l-adḥīm*
13. Kalimatu-l-Tawḥīd — *lāā °illāha °illa-llāhu waḥdahu la ṣharika-llāhu lahu-l-mulku wa lahu-l-ḥamd; yuḥyi wa yumit; wa huwa °ala kulli ṣhayʿun qaḍīr*
14. Kalimatu-ṣḥ-Shahādat — *°aṣḥādu °an lāā °illāha °illa-llāhu wa-°aṣḥādū anna muḥammadun °abduhu wa-rasuluh*
15. Kalimatu-t-Tayyib — *lāā °illāha °illa-llāhu muḥammadu-r-rasulu-llāh*

Then closing his eyes he should contemplate observation of Allāh ﷻ; the assembly of the Prophet ﷺ; or assemblies of the Prophets ﷺ and the °Awliyā° Karam ﷺ.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Then he/she should recollect death, the resurrection, the grave, the Day of Resurrection from the dead (*yawmu-l-qiyāmah*/يوم القيامة) and similar thoughts and try over and over again to inscribe His ﷺ personal name and the name of the Prophets ﷺ with the forefinger of the imagination.

The concentrator should imagine his forefinger to be a pen and the sun an inkpot in front of him. Dipping your finger in the inkpot of the sun you should write the Name of Allāh ﷻ on your forehead all the while imagining your head to be a large lantern and sitting there in should inscribe His personal name Allāh ﷻ on the glass in front of you. This will generate tremendous attraction (*jadhb jalāl*/جذب جلال) then you should write the long name Muḥammad ﷺ (as can be seen on the the bottom of page 26) on your chest so both letter “M”s should come on your two nipples with the “H” acting as a bridge and finally come to rest with the letter “D” in the center of the spiritual heart. This will generate loving attraction (*jadhb jamāl*/جذب جمال).

You should write the name *Muḥammad* ﷺ with white lunar color. But if you experience difficulty in writing afresh the personal Name of Allāh ﷻ along with the name Muḥammad ﷺ the Prophet on the above mentioned places, viz., the forehead and the breast, you should imagine the Name of Allāh ﷻ written in beautiful script as large as the size of the width of your forefinger in a red solar color on your breast or head and trace it with your forefinger, i.e., in your imagination and concentration you should use your finger like a pen. Similarly you should imagine the name *Muḥammad* ﷺ written on your chest in a white lunar color and try to write it with your finger.

Some find this second method seems easier.

Simultaneously carry on the observation of breathing in the heart so that when you inhale you say the word “ALLĀH” (الله) in your mind and when you exhale you say the word “HUUU” (هو).

When you practice reciting the name *Muḥammad* ﷺ you should say *Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* (محمد رسول الله) at the time of inhalation and say “*ṣallawātu-llāhu ‘alayhi wa ahlihi wa salam*” (صلوات الله عليه وآله) when you exhale. This can be done silently or on the breath.

Thus through repeated practice, His personal name, *Allāh* ﷻ, and the name of His Prophet, *Muḥammad* ﷺ will begin to shine inside you until your whole being shall be filled with light (*nūr*/نور).

A Short Talk on Dhikr

The Prophet ﷺ himself used to supplicate Allāh ﷻ to make him to be Light by saying; “Oh Allāh, place Light in my heart, and Light in my soul, Light upon my tongue, Light in my ears. Place Light to my right and Light to my left, Light behind me and Light before me, Light above me and Light beneath me. Place Light in my nerves and Light in my flesh, Light in my blood, Light in my hair and Light in my skin! Give me Light, increase my Light and make me be Light!”

If you will remember from the beginning of this *bayān* or *wazz* I quoted from Sayyidina ʿAlī ؑ and the words of one of his k̤hutbahs:

“Truly Allāh has made the *dhikr* as polish for the hearts. by which they hear after being deaf and see after being blind and yield after being resistant...

“There have always been slaves of Allāh...with whom He held intimate discourse through their thoughts and spoke with them through the essence of their intellects. They diffused illumination through the awakened light in their hearing and their seeing and their hearts calling to the remembrance of the days of Allāh...

“Indeed there is a special group (*ahl*) who belong to the *dhikr*, they have adopted it in place of the world, such that neither “trade nor commerce” distracts them from it. They spend the days of their life in it...it is as though they had left this world for the next and they are witnessing this world from the next.”

It is these people we are talking about and, inshallāh, we shall say a few more things about them mainly drawn on the work of my oldest teacher, Faqir Nūrī Muḥammad, Sarwari Qadrī ؑ.

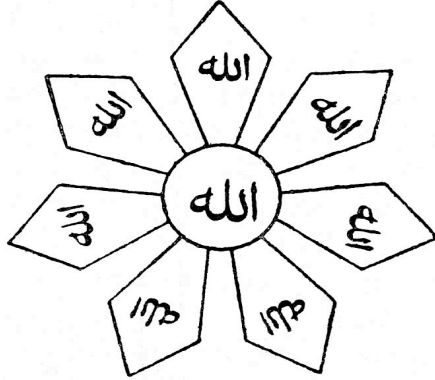
“When His personal name, Allāh ﷻ gets written on the heart of one of the *ahli-dh-dhikr* seven serial personalities of the heart blossom like a rose flower whereby seven bright ethereal personalities like seven petals, rose red in color, scented and sweet smelling, appear around the heart. Each ethereal personality glows with the lights of the seven personal attributes of the light of His personal name, Allāh ﷻ. The map of the name written on the circle of the heart opens like a rose with the seven hidden secret personal attributes (الله، لله، له، هو، محمد، فقر، لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله) inscribed with the light of love shown in the figure on the next page.

“When the Name “ALLĀH” (الله) is inscribed on any limb, a flash of light appears from that limb and it begins to recite the *dhikr* as well.”

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Here again we are speaking of the people of the pure heart.

“My *‘abd* never ceases to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts (*nawafil*) until I love him and when I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, his foot by which he walks.” (al-Bukhārī)



The seeker should also inscribe the name on the two palms of the hands and then on the two legs and feet.

Imagine your body to be a garment of the spirit (*ruh*/روح) that you are wearing so that from top to toe His personal Name of Allāh ﷻ is written within you and you should imagine yourself sitting inside this garment and writing from within while your index finger serves as a pen to write His Name ﷻ recalling that He ﷻ says in Qurʾān:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ

fa-dhkurūnī ʿadhkurkum

“Remember Me – I remember you!”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:152)

There is an important point that should be made clear. Some people, especially those who pick up this or other similar practices or don’t have a trustworthy teacher or shaykh, become intoxicated with the Name and the greedy ones want more and more and imagine, somehow, that if they were to renounce everything they would then enjoy constant and continual bliss. Sometimes even the excessive attraction (*jadhb*/جذب) brings about slackness in one’s pre-scribed practices like ṣalat and sawm or, even, zakāt and one even imagines that somehow one is beyond all that.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

This may reach a point where one may even give up one's obligatory (*farḍ*/فرض) prayers and observation of external religious law.

This is the trick of Shayṭān and the failure of an unrealised shaykh.

There is a well known story that goes like this:

“A man left his house for the desert in search of Allāh ﷻ. He deserted his wife and his children. He imagined that his wife and his children were hindrances in the way to Allāh ﷻ. This was a wall that came between him and his true destination. He searched for Him in every desert, on every ocean and in every land. He lost himself but did not find Allāh ﷻ. He lost everything and acquired nothing. In despair his heart and his legs were broken, and like a shadow he decreased in life, and when the clouds of death surrounded him he heard a voice calling, ‘Oh seeker of Allāh ﷻ. Allāh ﷻ dwelt with you in your house. He was there – where did *you* go?’”

Hence the seeker should never seek to change his condition simply according to his personal whims and imagination but, rather, the seeker should wait until Allāh ﷻ makes the conditions and the circumstances clear and changes the situation for him or her.

If the appearance of such a condition due to the *jalāl* power of the Name of Allāh ﷻ comes up the thoughts of renunciation and resignation, take over one should cool down and extinguish this heat by concentrating on the name of *Muḥammad* ﷺ, because the name ‘*Muḥammad*’ ﷺ has an esoteric cool nature. Its coolness and mercy creates forbearance, tolerance and immense patience in the person of the seeker and he successfully bears up under the heavy weight of the *jalāl* (جلال) intensity of the personal Name of Allāh ﷻ, and the seeker does not become impatient, intolerant or restless.



اذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ

°dhkurūhu kamā hadākum wa °in kuñtum min qablihi lamina-ḍ-ḍallīn

Remember Him as He has guided you,
whereas previously you were lost.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:198)

But hot or cool, mad or restrained – the end of it all is extinction.

Sayyidina °Ali ؑ says, “By Allāh, you will be smashed like dry clay and clay once broken does not return to what it was.”

A Short Talk on Dhikr

“By Allāh, you shall be tested and clearly distinguished from one another. By Allāh, you will be purified entirely until only a few of you remain. The true believers are only a small minority and a true believing woman (*mu'minina*) is rarer than a true believing man (*mu'min*), and true believing men are rarer than red sulphur; most men are animals save a handful of true believers (°illā qalilan min al-mu'minīn) and the true believer is a stranger. Simply saying you love us (*walāya*) will not turn you into a true believer.”

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَمَّا احْكُمُوا إِلَيْهِ تَرْجَعُونَ

lā ʾilaha illa huwa kullu shayʾin hālikun ʾilla wajhahu
lahu-l-ḥukmu wa ʾilayhi turjaʿūn

There is no deity but Him – all things are passing except His Face.
Judgement belongs to Him – to Him you will be returned
(Sūratu-l-Qaṣas 28:88)

Ṣadru-d-Dīn Qunawī (صدر الدين قونوي), one of ʾIbn ʿArabi's (رحمته الله) students, writes: “It is inconceivable that one thing should love another thing in the respect that thing differs from it. It can only love that thing as a result of the property of some meaning shared between the two of them, in respect of which an affinity is established between them which will lead to the domination of the property of that which brings about unification over the properties which bring about differentiation. In the end love is unity and Being is one.”

That, in short, is what the *dhikr* is all about – self extinction or *fanāʾ*.

For those who can see into the nature of *fanāʾ* see that it consists of the elimination of evil deeds and lowly attributes. In other words, *fanāʾ* is abstention from sin and the expulsion from the heart of all love other than the Divine Love; expulsion of greed, lust, desire, vanity, show, etc. In the state of *fanāʾ* the reality of the true and only relationship asserts itself in the heart. One realizes and knows that our only real relationship is with Allāh (ﷻ). *Fanāʾ* means to destroy your self. If you destroy your self in the love of Allāh (ﷻ) then that *fanāʾ* will convert into true life but *only* if you destroy your will and self in the will of Allāh (ﷻ). And the means to that is the *dhikr*.

They who remember will have their eyes filled with the Word of Revelation and their ears filled by the explanation of its true meaning. Morning and night they will drink from the cups of wisdom.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

I thought when I wrote the last paragraph that I was finished with this “Short Talk” which, in truth, is only short because organisers of such *mehfil* (محفل), including the *waaz* or *bayān* for Friday Prayers (*ṣalātu-l-jumu‘ah*/صلاة الجمعة) are always trying to cut things short for one reason or another mainly having to do with the exigencies of time, saying that people have to get back to work or get home to put the kids to bed, all of which contributes to a kind of dumbing down of the subject(s) under discussion which are often quite complex and not at all amenable to being cut short.

One of course realises it has all been said before and that there is nothing really new under the sun, but in truth it hasn’t all been said before and understanding takes time and the subject of *dhikr* is not so quickly done with, so I decided to say a bit more on the subject.

The idea of *fanā’*, which I very much see as an integral end product and one of the direct results of *dhikr*, is not very much liked by the modernists, literalists and the exotericists who hold that, since *fanā’* is mentioned, they imagine, neither in the Qur’ān nor in the Sunnah, it is a Ṣūfī gimmick, a cheap trick and a satanic deception, originally thought up by so-called and self-styled mystics among the Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians to adulterate the great religion of Islām. But it is not for Allāh ﷻ clearly mentions it directly:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

kullu mañ ‘alayhā fān:

wa yabāqa wajhu rabbika dhu-l-jalālī wa-l-‘ikram

everything on it [the earth] shall disappear

yet the Face (*Presence*) of your Sustainer will remain forever,

Possessor of The Majesty and The Splendor.

(Sūratu-r-Raḥman 55:27)

So regardless of what the exotericists say or think, Allāh ﷻ clearly does mention *fanā’* (فناء في الله) in the Qur’an and at the same time, and, very importantly, in the same context, mentions *baqā’* (بقاء بالله) or subsistence or eternal life in Allāh ﷻ. albeit that union is no form of incarnationism for that can never be the case since the relative and the absolute are just that. Rather, it is subsistence in total annihilation, the end of one’s relative form or limited existence.

In any case *fanā’* is a state of complete annihilation of the carnal self – a sort of oblivion of self-consciousness or personal identity.

A Short Talk on Dhikr

Abdu-l-Karīm al-Qushayrī رحمه الله said of this state, attributing the statement to ʿĀbū ʿUṭhmān, “No capacity remained within them save to remember (*tadhkur*/تذکر) Allāh ﷻ, not even the capacity to remember their own selves. When this state prevails it is called in relation to the one who experiences it, extinction – nay extinction of extinction – for the soul has become extinct to itself and being extinct to its own extinction it becomes unconscious of itself and unconscious indeed of its unconsciousness since were it conscious of its own unconsciousness it would still be conscious of itself.”

“Whoever has not tasted the loneliness of unconsciousness will not find the food of the intimacy of remembrance (*dhikr*).” (al-Ghazālī)

Thus the *dhākir* is made to pass into another state which is a sort of oblivion of unconsciousness. Since two negatives make one positive, the pilgrim at this stage regains his individuality as he was when he started the journey. The only difference is that in the beginning he was self-conscious, but after having expired or died (so to speak) in the Divine Being, the *dhākir* regains a sort of individuality which is as *baqāʾ-bi-llāh* (بقاء بالله) or living or subsisting by Allāh ﷻ not in the sense, again, of any form of incarnationism but very much in the sense of the earlier mentioned Ḥadīth Qudsī:

“My ʿabd never ceases to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts (*nawafil*) until I love him and when I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, his foot by which he walks.” (al-Bukhārī)

Here again, and I stress this, we are speaking of the people of the pure cleansed heart – the *mukhlisīn* (مخلصين)

Those of whom it is said, “Eyes see Him not through the observation of sight but hearts see Him through the truth of ʿimān.” For the “pure hearted ones” are those who ‘see’ Allāh ﷻ because their hearts have become the true places of remembrance. Those who see Allāh ﷻ by Allāh ﷻ and know Allāh ﷻ by Allāh ﷻ (*ʿirafu-llāh bi-llāh*), as Allāh ﷻ says,

وَشَٰهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ

wa shāhidiñw-wa mashhūdā

by the Witness and the Witnessed

(Sūratu-l-Burūj 85:3)



A Short Talk on Dhikr

But besides this we have to take into consideration that every spiritual state, every function, every feeling, every act has its spiritual entity, its Angel which manifests itself in the light proper to it. The Qur^ʿān, Prophecy, the Shāhādah (the profession of ʾIslām in the true fidelity of faith (ʾimān), Initiation (*bayʿah*/بَيْعَة), the spirits of the initiates, the great shuyukḥ, the dear friends.

Every form of *Dhikr*, every form of Divine Office and Worship, all of these realities are manifest by the light unique to each.

This may come in the beginnings as brief flashes and sparks which most often originate from acts such as prayer and *wuḍūʾ* (وضوء), whereas longer and brighter lights stream out from the recitals of Qur^ʿān and even longer out of the *Dhikr* itself. There may be the visualization of the well-known ʾāyāt from the chapter of the Light:

مِثْلُ نُورٍ لَا كَمِشْكَاتٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ط
الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ط الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهُ كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيُّ ط
يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ ط
لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ ط
بَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ط
نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ط يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ط

mathālu nūrihi kamishkātīn fihā miṣbāḥ:

al miṣbāḥu fī zujājatīn: az-zujājatu kānnahā kawkabun durriyyun

yūqadu min shajaratim-mubārakatin zaytūnatiñ

lā sharqiyyatin wa lā gharbiyyatin

yakadu zaytuhā yuḍīʿu wa law lam tamsas-hu nār:

nūrun ʿala nūr:

yahdī-llāhu li-nūrihi mañy-yashāʾ

The example of His Light is that of a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, the glass like a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, its oil all but giving off light even if no fire touches it.

Light upon Light.

Allah guides to His Light whoever He wills.

(Sūratu-n-Nūr 24:35)

A Short Talk on Dhikr

In this state the sun, the moon and the stars may appear as though immersed either in the sea or in running water or also in motionless water as in a pool or a well. All the mystics recognize the lights of their own unique ‘spiritual entity’. These immersions in a transparent light-filled entity proclaim the extreme purity of the heart, the state of the pacified soul, the tranquil self, which at the boundary (*barazkh*) allows the rays of the Divine lights to pierce through all the veils. This is the meaning of the *sūrah* of the Star.

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى

mā kadhāba-l-fu^ʿadu ma ra^ʾā

The heart did not lie [about] what it saw.

(Sūratu-n-Najm 53:11)

This mystical sense sanctions the visions of the Prophet ﷺ as in his saying, “My heart has seen my Lord in the most beautiful forms.” And also his ﷺ saying, “If your hearts were always in the state that they are in during *dhikr*, the angels would come to see you to the point that they would greet you in the middle of the road.” (Muslim)

To return from where we started *dhikr*, is something of tremendous importance. Indeed the Prophet ﷺ said, “The earth and everything in it is cursed, except for *dhikr* and what attends *dhikr*, and a teacher (of *dhikr*) and a student (of *dhikr*).” Narrated by at-Tirmidhī

The one who engages in *dhikr* has the highest rank of all before Allāh ﷻ. People who call on Allāh ﷻ without distraction are mentioned in Qur^ʾān, as well as the effect that calling has on their heart: “In houses which Allāh ﷻ has allowed to be raised to honor and for His Name to be remembered in them; He is glorified there day and night by men whom neither trade nor sale can divert from the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.” (24:36-37). “Those who believe, and their hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of Allāh – surely by remembering Allāh, peace comes to the heart.” (13:28)

During the night of Isrā^ʾ wa Mi^ʿraj, the Prophet ﷺ was taken up to a point where he heard the Pens writing the Divine Decrees he saw a man disappear into the light of the Throne. He said: “Who is this? – an angel?” He heard, “No!” “Is it a Prophet?” Again came “No!” He said: “Who is it then?” The answer was: “This is a man whose tongue was moist with the *dhikr* of Allāh ﷻ in the world...”

wa-llāhu ‘alim

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